

Sustainable Water Governance and Indigenous Law Research Project (2016-2023)

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard.

Article 25 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

This research project seeks to advance scholarship on Indigenous law and sustainable water co-governance. Indigenous voices and perspectives are at the core of our team, which includes Indigenous knowledge keepers and community members, water scientists, social scientists, and artists.

Northern Canada has the third largest oil and gas reserves in the world. Resource exploitation has intensified in this region, and sustainable water governance has become a highly critical issue, particularly for Indigenous communities grappling with access to safe drinking water, environmental water quality, and related livelihood and health issues. Many actors have recently called for the development of new models of Indigenous co-governance and stewardship for water resources that include Indigenous voices, sciences and ontologies at the core of sustainable water resource planning, policy development, and regulatory decision-making.



Working with Indigenous communities in Northern and Western Canada, we will create tools to support Indigenous water co-governance. Leading Canadian legal scholars will devise concrete strategies for governance reforms to support the uptake of these tools.

Our Community-Based Research approach prioritizes Indigenous law as our guiding framework for relationship building, supported by OCAP (*Ownership, Control, Access,*

Possession) protocols, as well as the Community-Based Research protocol developed by the University of British Columbia's First Nations House of Learning. A central component of the project will be annual Water Bush Camps, which offer land-based experiential learning spaces in which training and collaborative research will occur.

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Team Members

- Dr. Karen Bakker (P.I.), *Co-Director of Program on Water Governance, University of British Columbia*
- Hannah Askew, *Staff Counsel, West Coast Environmental Law*
- Jill Baird, *Curator, UBC Museum of Anthropology*
- Caleb Behn, J.D., *Executive Director, Keepers of the Water*
- Dr. Rutgerd Boelens, *Professor, Wageningen University*
- Carolyn du Bois, *Water Program Manager, Walter & Duncan Gordon Foundation*
- Dr. John Borrows, J.D., *Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Law, Faculty of Law, University of Victoria*
- Dr. Carrie Bourassa, *Professor of Indigenous Health Studies, First Nations University of Canada*
- Dr. Peter Brown, *Professor of Geography, McGill University*
- Dr. Gordon Christie, *Associate Professor and Director, First Nations Legal Studies, UBC*
- Dr. Alice Cohen, *Assistant Professor in Earth and Environmental Science at Acadia University*
- Dr. Glen Coulthard, *Associate Professor of First Nations and Indigenous Studies, UBC*
- Dr. Aimée Craft, *Assistant Professor in Faculty of Law, University of Manitoba*
- Dr. Michelle Daigle, *Assistant Professor of Geography, UBC*
- Gwaai Edenshaw, *Haida Artist, Haida Gwaii*
- Steve Ellis, *Program Lead, Northern Canada, Tides Foundation*
- Zack Embree, *Videographer, New Energy Media*
- Dr. Erin Freeland-Ballantyne, *Dean, Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning*
- Jessica Hallenbeck, *Principal, Hallenbeck Consultants*
- Dr. Leila Harris, *Associate Professor in the Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability, UBC*
- Larry Innes, J.D., *Partner, Olthuis, Kleer, Townshend (OKT), LLP*
- Dr. Mark Johnson, *Associate Professor of Earth, Ocean & Atmospheric Sciences, UBC*
- Dr. Linc Kesler, *Professor and Director of First Nations House of Learning, UBC*
- Dr. Rosemary Knight, *Professor in the School of Earth, Energy & Environmental Sciences, Stanford*
- Dr. Kiera Ladner, *Associate Professor in Political Studies, University of Manitoba*
- Kate Menzies, *Community Relations, Brinkman Forest Ltd.*
- Dr. Madjid Mohseni, *Professor of Chemical Engineering, UBC*
- Margery Moore, *Principal, Moore Environmental Solutions*
- Dr. Kate Neville, *Assistant Professor of Political Science and School of the Environment, University of Toronto*
- Dr. Emma Norman *Professor and Chair in the Native Environmental Science Dept., Northwest Indian College*
- Linda Nowlan, *Staff Counsel, West Coast Environmental Law*
- Francois Paulette, *Dene Nation, Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning*
- Merrell-Ann Phare, *Executive Director/Legal Counsel, Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources*
- Kinnie Starr, *Musician, Violent Inch Records*
- Kelly Terbasket, *Program Director, IndigenEYEZ*
- Dr. Nancy Turner, *Professor in Environmental Studies, University of Victoria*
- Dr. Avner Vengosh, *Professor of Geochemistry & Water Quality, Earth and Ocean Sciences, Duke University*
- Dr. Erika Weinthal, *Lee Hill Snowdon Professor of Environmental Policy, Duke University*
- Aaron Whitman, *Environmental Bio-Detection Products Inc.*
- Dr. Rita Wong, *Associate Professor in Critical and Cultural Studies, Emily Carr University*

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- Stanford University
- Laurentian University
- Acadia University
- First Nations University of Canada
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